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# Regional Safe Schools Programs in the State of Illinois

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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Regional Safe Schools Programs in the State of Illinois

BY

Michael R. Metzen

**FIELD EXPERIENCE**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS FIELD EXPERIENCE BE ACCEPTED AS

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## **Abstract**

Alternative educational programs have been in existence for decades in the public school community. They were designed to meet the special needs of students, either for the benefit of the student or the educational atmosphere of their previous program. Many of these programs have been a component of the local district, serving students within that particular district. In 1995, the Illinois General Assembly created a program for disruptive youth. The intent of that program was two-fold in nature. That program, called the Regional Safe Schools Program, was created to serve disruptive youth for their educational benefit, as well as voiding the regular classroom from the educational disruption caused by those students.

A unique element of the Regional Safe Schools Program was that it was centered administratively within the 45 Regional Offices of Education throughout the State of Illinois. Legislative appropriation was allocated to establish those programs in each region according to the needs assessment of that particular region. Grade level parameters, as well as administrative options were given latitude for developmental purposes through the legislation.

While the legislation was passed into law in 1995, most of the regions of the state used the 1995-1996 school year for planning purposes. Implementation of those plans went into effect in the 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school years. With the relative youth of the programs, it was important to assess the various components of the program and with that evaluation, apply the results for the purpose of program improvement. The intent of this study was to collect the data and analyze the results for comparison purposes to improve the Vermilion County program.

All of the Regional Offices of Education were surveyed concerning their programs in the areas of curriculum, assessment of students, behavioral modification programs, and overall success. Eighty-two percent of the surveys were returned indicating many similarities, even taking into consideration the difference in the demographics of each region. Technology was considered a major instructional tool. Programs usually included the use of a behavioral modification program, as well as some related social services. Advancement to the next grade level as the result of completed course work was used as indicators of success.

The data collected as a result of this study were analyzed and demographically compared to the existing program in Vermilion County. Recommendations for improvement to that program were made as a result of the findings and analyses of this study. It was recommended that the Vermilion County Program expand to students who reach age sixteen. It was also recommended to increase the funding for increased training and availability of social services for the students in the program. Ultimately, the evaluation of the Regional Safe Schools Programs rests in the coming years as the success of the students being served in the program will become measured by their contribution to society.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Overview of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the basis for curriculum, methods of student evaluation, use of behavioral modification programs, and the overall perception of success of the Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois. The Regional Safe Schools Program in Illinois is considered an alternative school program that by definition takes on a description of total uniqueness. This general educational description of an alternative program suggests a deviation from the typical educational setting. It is the intent of the program that lends true definition to providing an alternative to students. Such determination of need for an alternative program may not always be initiated at the local level. When the need for an alternative program is initiated by proposed legislation, the constitution of that program once it becomes statutory law, must be as encompassing as the total area of the state. The resulting legislation provided the scope of the program and allowed the local needs assessment to play major roles in the development of the individual programs.

With the legislation and subsequent formulation of the Regional Safe Schools Program, this particular alternative program was defined to mean a program ultimately unique in that it represents a program to which students are assigned, usually as one last chance prior to expulsion.

Programs of this nature have typically focused on behavior modification in addition to the curriculum or pedagogy. The uniqueness and the infancy stage of this particular program emphasize the need for program evaluation, especially in the areas

outlined previously. With the collection of the data and their analysis, the culminating purpose was to compare the results of the study with the actual components of the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program, resulting in recommendations for improvement of the local program.

### Background

Regional Safe Schools Programs were initiated in the 1996-1997 school year for implementation and planning purposes. Prior to that date, a few Regional Offices of Education had established alternative programs for disruptive youth in conjunction with large school districts in their regions using other funds. The Regional Safe Schools Programs is a statewide program with 47 grants representing 44 Regional Offices of Education (two Regional Offices of Education formed a consortium), three Intermediate Service Centers in Suburban Cook County and the Chicago Public Schools. Initially, 12 grants provided funds for planning and implementation, while 35 grants were funded for program planning with the option to expand the grants to support implementation. By May of 1997, 45 programs were in the implementation phase and two Regional Offices chose to continue planning. By the end of FY97, 33 Regional Safe Schools Programs were providing academic and counseling services.

With the development of the programs passed through the General Assembly in Senate Bill No. 50 (see Appendix A), the idea of establishing a Regional Safe Schools Program for each region of Illinois has moved toward reality. The basis for the establishment of the programs is outlined in the law as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/13A-1 new)

Sec. 13A-1. Legislative Declaration. The General Assembly finds and

declares as follows:

(b) The State cannot provide its children with the education they deserve and require unless the environment is conducive to learning.

(c) That the environment cannot be achieved unless an atmosphere of safety prevails, assuring that the person of each student, teacher, staff member is respected, and that none of the people are subjected to violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, or otherwise confrontational or inappropriate behaviors that disrupt the educational atmosphere.

(d) In most schools, although the disruptive students who are the primary cause of inappropriate educational environments comprise a small percentage of the total student body, they nevertheless consume a substantial amount of the time and resources of teachers and school administrators who are required to address and contain that disruptive behavior.

(e) Disruptive students typically derive little benefit from traditional school programs and may benefit substantially by being transferred from their current school into an alternative public school, where their particular needs may be more appropriately and individually addressed and where they may benefit from the opportunity for a fresh start in a new educational environment. At those alternative schools, innovative academic and school-to-work programs, including, but not limited to the techniques of work-based learning and technology-delivered learning, can be utilized to best help the students enrolled in those schools to become productive citizens.

(f) Students need an appropriate, constructive classroom atmosphere to benefit

from the teacher's presentations. Students cannot afford the classroom disruptions and often become frustrated and angry at the inability of their teachers and schools to control disruptive students.

Using the legislation as a program theme, Regional Offices of Education assessed their regional needs for program development. This program development was designed to serve a specific population within the alternative education format. Funding and continued legislative support has and will continue to require accountability for their continuance. Success of these programs will be measured by a multitude of assessment criteria. The effects of the programs throughout the state must be evaluated on the learning atmosphere in the regular public schools where the disruptive student might otherwise be enrolled prior to suspension or expulsion without the Regional Safe Schools Program as an option. But the focus of this study is the actual program at the completion of the initial year. Its infancy provides the significance of the study. The general variance of development within the legislative boundaries further enhances that importance. With the capability granted through the above-mentioned legislation, each Regional Office of Education has had the opportunity to create a program to best meet the needs of that region.

Ultimately this study will take all the unique components of the existing programs throughout the state and analyze them accordingly, to take the relevant findings and provide a comparison for improvement of the Vermilion County program. In lieu of a best practice resource due to the uniqueness and age of these programs, this study provides a data analysis that will allow those components of the Vermilion County program to be compared to similar programs throughout the state.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was to evaluate data from the Regional Safe Schools Programs throughout Illinois in specific areas in order to improve those same areas of the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program. This study selected four major areas of the Regional Safe Schools Programs for the purpose of program evaluation and a basis for improvement. They were the methodology of curriculum offered throughout the programs, the method of student evaluation, the integration of behavioral modification strategies or programs and the overall success of the program.

### Research Questions

The objective of the research questions was to collect the data for methodology and curriculum, the method of student assessment, the use of behavioral modification programs and related social service agencies and the measure of the success of the program. Specifically, the project examined the following research questions:

1. What is the methodology for the curriculum used throughout the state for junior high programs? This research and analysis addressed several components of the curriculum. Among the data collection components in this area were the issues of computer software-generated curriculum versus teacher/text driven instruction, and the alignment of curriculum to district curriculums.

2. What is the basis for student evaluation? Successful completion of junior high school course work is not always measured by the accumulation of academic credits to be applied toward promotion to the next grade level. Inquiry into the

evaluation of school achievement with the various methods of instruction was a major research area for this study. Is the curriculum evaluated solely by a computer software program, solely by teacher evaluation, or is the component of evaluation a combination of teacher and computer? These are important areas to distinguish.

3. What behavioral modification programs are integrated within the Regional Safe Schools Programs throughout the regions of the state? Are the problems that led to the eligibility for suspension and expulsion addressed? This research identified both programs and services in the behavioral and social areas of these students' programs.

4. What are the criteria used by Regional Safe Schools Programs to measure overall student success? What are the percentages of the students meeting the emphasized criteria in each region? Among the items studied were length of time in the program, dropouts from the program, and transition back into the regular education programs of the home districts at the conclusion of the students' enrollment in the Regional Safe Schools Programs.

The study concluded with an analysis of the research addressed in the objectives and provided a resource for comparison and a data analysis of successful practice that will be available for the purpose of improvement of the local program.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. It was assumed that demographics of all the Regional Offices of Education in Illinois dictate the needs of each region as the Regional Safe Schools. Programs

were planned, implemented, and functioned through the end of the 1997-1998 school year.

2. It was assumed that evaluation of these programs was both formative in the continuing development of the programs and in some instances, formative in the judgment of the future of the programs.

3. It was assumed that although the population and individual demographic makeup of each region had a direct reflective influence on the direction of the program, that all the Regional Safe School Programs were born out of the same legislation and have the criteria for participation outlined within the actual legislation and have implemented the program accordingly.

4. It was assumed that some regions have multiple sites for this form of alternative education, while others may not have begun a program according to the assessment of the needs of that particular region.

### Limitations

This study was limited to a controlled population, which was that of 45 Regional Offices of Education and their empowerment to establish a Regional Safe Schools Program in their region according to law. There is a need for complete and total program evaluation of the Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois. Such an evaluation will be mandated by the accountability factor for future funding by the General Assembly. In the opinion of this researcher, only extended time will answer certain questions of the overall success of the programs. Those answers ultimately will be supplied by a follow-up study on the youth that were served in the Regional Safe School Programs. That evaluation will have to be done by an agency with the

time, funds and interest in the total evaluation of the program. It was the desire of this researcher in this field study to limit the scope in order to focus on particular areas that would provide practical program improvement on a local level.

### Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to evaluate four major areas of the existing programs in order to improve the related areas in the Vermilion County program. Those areas are the methodology of curriculum, basis of student evaluation, use of behavioral modification programs and measure of overall success of the program.

Specifically, the research questions for the areas mentioned were addressed for the Regional Safe Schools Programs serving students in grades six through eight. In Vermilion County, the Regional Safe Schools Program currently serves students of these grade levels.

### Definition of Terms

It is important to define specific terminology to insure the ultimate focus of this study, its purpose, and the application of the findings. The following operational definitions were used in this study:

Aggression Replacement Training is a comprehensive intervention program for aggressive youth. It is a three-part approach that teaches adolescents to understand and replace aggression and violent behavior with positive alternatives. It is designed for training for high-risk or delinquent adolescents.

Behavioral Modification is the programmatic implementation into the educational setting of procedures, programs, and plans that strive to identify and modify to the students of the Regional Safe Schools Program the particular behavior



that ultimately resulted in the administrative transfer to the program.

Curriculum is the pedagogy of instruction, including but not limited to the scope and sequence of content, the method of instruction, the use of technology, and the development of the individual optional educational plan for the students

Home District is the school district or building that administratively transfers students to the Regional Safe Schools Program rather than suspending or expelling these students from attendance at their enrolled school.

Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) is an alternative program for disruptive youth that are eligible for suspension or expulsion under the discipline policies of their respective local districts. These students are administratively transferred in lieu of discipline action to a program for a defined length of time for multiple purposes. It is the “second chance” opportunity for such youth to continue their academic programs for the purpose of achievement rather than falling further behind on their individual timeline for grade level advancement or graduation. This academic program is geared to the individual in conjunction with the transferring district’s curriculum. It is to be grade appropriate and is to be integrated with behavior modification support with the ultimate goal of returning to the district from which the student was administratively transferred and completion or progress toward academic completion of the specific level of school. A secondary goal is to remove these students for a period of time from the regular setting where otherwise their presence had disrupted the educational atmosphere.

Student Evaluation is the progress within the curriculum, stressing the total scope of such evaluation. This includes the instructional as well as the measured

success of the behavioral intervention activities.

Success of the Regional Safe Schools Programs is defined as the successful re-entry into the school administratively transferring the student to the program or completion of the individual academic curriculum, resulting in progression to the next level. Long term evaluation will determine success for the students transferred out of the mainstream of the educational setting into the program, and if they returned.

Among the important elements in the success determination are the dropout ratio, the forced termination ratio, the graduation rate, the return rate to the home district, and those moving on to other alternative modes of formal education such as the General Educational Development program.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Related Literature and Research**

#### **Rationale**

The rationale for this topic is the infancy of the Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois, which creates an element of uniqueness due to the short time of existence of the program. While the concept of alternative education has been around for decades, the concept of a program for students considered disruptive and who otherwise would be out of the educational mainstream and void of an opportunity, given the initiative on the part of the student to continue academic growth, is relatively new. This specific program is also limited by legislation to one within each of the Regional Offices of Education in Illinois, which limits the number of possible administrative programs to 45 statewide. The demographical make-up of each region and the regional assessment of need result in a wide assortment of emphasis of programmatic characteristics within the parameters of the program. Having completed the first year of the program at the conclusion of the 1997-1998 school year, there was a need to assess the success of the program for future considerations and improvement of program responsibilities.

With the stated problems, hypotheses, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study, it would be within the professional judgment of the targeted personnel for data input to accurately reflect and assess the Regional Safe Schools Program at the conclusion of its initial year. With the findings and conclusions made in this study, improvement by comparison and logical inference from the data will produce positive results for the operation and point of emphasis of

the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program for the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 school years.

Researching about alternative education first requires an understanding that school personnel, researchers, and authors of articles are using many different definitions for the term. These differences in meaning have implications for a program's purposes and structure.

Although each program is designed differently to meet the needs of the students it serves, the recognition of those needs alone is only part of the element of success. The literature, especially information based on the experiences of alternative programs, provides valuable guidance for those establishing a new alternative program or working to improve an existing one. There are several common elements found in most successful programs, even if the program's purpose, student population, and structure varied greatly. The research which follows indicates that these elements include a flexible, supportive environment: student/staff collaboration towards achieving common goals, individualization of curriculum and instruction, and efforts to provide students with choices so that they feel more in control of their lives. It is the experience of this researcher that programs are also more likely to be successful if staff and students choose to participate in the alternative program rather than being assigned to it.

While alternative programs have provided some students with successful experiences, they raise troubling questions. Are students best served when they are removed from the regular school and placed with a peer group of other students who have failed, whether for academic or disciplinary reasons? Does the availability of an

alternative program decrease the likelihood that the regular schools will change in ways that make success more possible for all students? Those who would like to see schools become more like successful alternative programs point out the lessons learned from these programs and the students they serve--the importance of a sense of community, instruction focused on the needs of the individual students, and efforts to provide students with a greater sense of control over their experience.

Raywid identified two traits common to all alternative programs. Those traits were that programs are designed to serve students for whom traditional schooling is not working, and that the programs differed in organization, curriculum, and environment from traditional schools. Assessing the population to be served is a key element in the design and implementation of an alternative program. Alternative programs for students who are presumed to need remediation or rehabilitation--academic, social/emotional, or both have the remedial focus. The assumption is that after successful treatment students can return to mainstream programs. These programs focus on remedial work and on stimulation of social and emotional growth--often through emphasizing the school itself as a community. These programs often improve student attendance and increase credits accumulated (Raywid, 1994).

Because the student enrolled in an alternative school has developed an educational need as individual as the personality itself, the traditional academic environment must be adapted to meet the individuality of those assessed needs (Gold, 1995). They can be met with complete integration of methodology, curriculum, counseling, and support services. Supportive relationships are critical in these alternative programs. Troubled and troublesome adolescents typically have

experienced years of failure in schools, hostile relationships with their teachers, and rejection by peers. An appropriate number of these students come from families that provide inadequate support and that are fraught with conflict and disorganization. Thus, the school must provide extraordinary support to keep problematic youth involved and reasonably well behaved.

What is lacking in the home or previous school setting must be recognized. The approach to these troubled youth must take into consideration what may be lacking in the past in the humanistic element of the educational atmosphere. It is essential that alternative school teachers provide warm, interpersonal relationships. Students spend most of their school day with the same teacher, which is in contrast to the regular academic setting. Considerably more of the classroom activity consists of one-on-one teacher-student interaction in these schools than in conventional schools (Gold, 1995).

According to research conducted by Gold for the National Educational Service in 1995, preventing scholastic failure and providing a genuinely caring staff appears to be sufficient to improve students' grades and behavior. Undoubtedly, inadequate caregiving is responsible for a great deal of the problems the students present, and it is widely believed that schools by themselves can accomplish little or nothing with problematic students unless conditions in their homes improve.

The approach for learning must be as individualistic as each and every student enrolled in the program. Arno and Strout discussed both the positive and negative aspects of alternative education in their alternative school study (1980). The flexibility of curriculum and methodology must be elements of the approach itself.

Teachers in alternative programs for disruptive youth individualize instruction through use of programmed instruction, learning contracts, and point systems or token economies, which rewards students for desirable classroom behaviors and progress toward specified academic goals.

Where programs are not rich in media resources, it is recommended that even when students do a great deal of log writing and peer editing, the faculty might be considered a logical extension. Increased writing and role-playing could be accomplished by having students write scripts. The scripts could be edited with the assistance of peers and then placed in periodic competitions leading to productions. These were the conclusions of the 1992 study on alternative school programs by Heger.

Cicchelli and Marcus's study emphasized an extremely strong component being the focus of ongoing counseling and the links between academic and social learning. Staff members in all schools function daily as counselors who show concern, warmth, and caring. Each school and program conveys a strong sense identity and purpose worthy of a distinctive mission regarding who they are and what they are all about regarding the meaning of education. Parents commit to the mission of the school as it relates to their child's schooling. Social workers visiting the home help the parents take ownership of the enrollment and success of the student in the program (Cicchelli & Marcus, 1995).

Lamperes (1994) suggested a key element is the development of a supportive community for students. This consistency of approach promotes the notion that every student can learn, even in an alternative setting. The environment must be one of

noncoercive collaboration rather than behavioral control. Elimination of the barrier that establishes authority must come first. Students must have personal knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. Staff members must engage in creating classroom norms, timeliness for learning, and alternative ways to demonstrate achievement based on learning style needs.

Studies specifically related to alternative education have focused primarily upon their organizational development rather than their effectiveness. Lack of performance data may be due in part, to the fragile nature of alternative programs. Many programs are short-lived. Alternative education seems to be particularly sensitive to the ebb and flow of resources, public opinion, and internal stress. Alternative programs are the bridges between the present and the future. This has been the historical purpose of alternative education (National School Safety Center, 1991).

In the Gateway Program, Davis (1994) concludes that counseling in various degrees is an essential component of any alternative program. Group counseling with interactive elements often serves as a catalyst for expression. Students in an alternative setting have had a history of limitations to their academic performances based on an environmental background to a large degree. Integration of counseling and behavioral intervention programs is essential to the development of a successful educational setting.

The Inverness Center in the Baltimore County Public Schools is a middle level alternative program. In the study of this program by Lloyd (1997), it was found that academics must have the emphasis of remediation. Lloyd further found students



need individualized instruction based on their needs. Behavioral modification programs must be included to insure success. Such plans must be based on the individual needs of the students, much like the need to individualize on the part of academics. Constant communication is the key factor in the relationship between the home schools and the alternative program prior to and after the students are returned to their home schools.

Alternative educational programs are for special students with special needs. The approach to complete the integration of academics, behavioral modification, counseling, self-esteem activities, and the underlying notion that the alternative setting is one where every student can learn, is essential to the success of the program. Financial volatility, social labeling, and the attitude that the students in the alternative program are failures in the traditional setting, never to return to the mainstream are all factors to battle to achieve success. The above research indicates that adaptation and implementation are the keys. The need to adapt the student to a situation that can create a positive self-worth feeling will result in recognition of the importance to better the individual. Traditional approaches and instructional personality must be adapted to meet the needs of the program.

Successful programs have many common characteristics. While each program is unique, there are some commonalties. Successful alternative programs typically are small in size, administrated by those most closely involved in the program, promote parental/community involvement, provide students with counseling and self-management techniques in addition to an academic program, work at tying the school experience to the “real world” through experimental learning, and present

students with clearly stated and achievable academic goals.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Design of the Study**

It was the purpose of this study to collect related data from the existing 45 Regional Safe Schools Programs within the Regional Offices of Education in Illinois and analyze related data in ways to improve the existing Regional Safe Schools Program in Vermilion County. In order to collect the related data, it was the intent of this researcher to narrow the scope of this study in a manner to fully adapt the findings for the purpose of comparison to the Vermilion County

Independent variables that would reveal relative and valid data for program improvement would be the demographics of the regions served and the amount of financial support generated toward the operations of the programs. Even with the eclectic nature of the variables, the collective comparison of data on the curricular structure, the behavioral intervention strategies, and the assessment of success of the various programs would lend important information toward the formulation of a significant perspective for improvement of the Vermilion County program.

#### **General Design of the Study**

The survey was designed by the researcher to provide data to answer the following four research questions. The survey number, which provides data to that research question, is enclosed in parenthesis.

1. What is the methodology for curriculum used throughout the state for junior high programs (Part II, No. 6 and Part II, No. 7)?
2. What is the basis of student evaluation (Part II, No. 6)?

3. What behavioral modification programs and the use of related social service agencies are integrated within the Regional Safe Schools Programs throughout the regions of the state (Part II, No. 8 and Part III)?

4. What are the criteria used by the Regional Safe Schools Programs to determine overall success achieved on the part of the students in the program?

4..What percentage of the population in the program successfully met these criteria (Part IV)?

#### Population and Sample

A survey (see Appendix B) and a cover letter (see Appendix C) were sent to the existing Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois at the conclusion of their initial year of existence. Illinois is divided into six areas representing the 45 Regional Offices of Education. These areas represent various populations and needs representative of each individual region. Programs vary concerning the age of the students served to the amount of funding available. Despite the noted differences, the curricular structure, the use of behavioral modification programs, and the overall perspective of success or failure provided important information for local program examination and ultimately program improvement.

#### Instrumentation and Data Collection

In the survey (see Appendix B), items of enrolled student characteristics were addressed. Among the items surveyed were student eligibility, educational status, grade level, and appropriate services provided. Student eligibility was considered as a result of pending suspension or expulsion. Educational status was either regular

education or special education. In the area of appropriate services, respondents were to indicate whether the students were receiving any of the following services: behavior modification training, counseling of any type, association to other social agencies working in conjunction with the Regional Safe Schools Program. Any subsequent referral from the Regional Safe Schools Program to other agencies after the student has been administratively transferred to the program was to be noted.

Among the results of the programs assessed for the purpose of data collection were the following: attendance patterns, successful academic completion of curricula, returning to the home school district at the completion of the suspension or expulsion tenure, advancement to the next grade level, dropping out of the program and reason for this result and any mobility factor that was reflected in the end of the year reports developed by the programs throughout the state. Respondents were given ranges from which to select their best estimate of the percentages of students enrolled. (Part IV)

Narrative and subjective input from the personnel of the various programs included the selection and effective use of behavioral intervention programs with the program and any information as to the success of the students exiting the program and returning to their home districts. (Part IV, No.10, 11,12)

The survey was designed to collect the above-mentioned data in an orderly and efficient manner, allowing an appropriate comparison to the existing program in Vermilion County. With the data collected through the developed survey (see Appendix B), it was the purpose of the field study to analyze and apply the related and valid information toward the promotion of improvement in the Vermilion County

program. Validity of the survey was based on the comparison to the survey used by the Illinois State Board of Education in the mid-year report of the Regional Safe Schools Programs. Reliability was not determined due the initial year of the program and no comparative data.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, using aggregated totals and percentages were used to present the results. The analyses of data were presented through the use of tables.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Overview

Forty-five Regional Safe School Programs were surveyed throughout Illinois with 37 programs responding. The data presented and analyzed is based on the receipt of data from 82% of the programs existing at the time of this research.

One important section of the survey deals with demographic information of the 45 programs surveyed. That information was relative to the comparison to the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program and is shown on Table 1.

Table 1

#### Demographics of the Program: Grade Range Served (N=37)

Grade Range of the Students Served	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Grades 6 through 8	7	19%
Grades 6 through 9	5	14%
Grades 9 through 12	5	14%
Grades 6 through 12	20	54%

Of the Regional Safe Schools Programs returning the survey, 54% reported serving grade six through grade twelve. Only 14 % of the programs were serving high school age students exclusively. Approximately one third of the programs were developed for junior high students. The legislation that created the Regional Safe Schools Programs allowed for the grade range for the program to encompass grade six through grade twelve. Only slightly more than half (54%) of the initial programs

covered the total range.

Location of programs sites varied throughout Illinois. The respondents reported according to the possibilities listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of the Program: Location of the Site (N=37)

Site Location	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Independent Location	17	46%
Special Education Cooperative	2	1%
Existing Alternative School	8	22%
Local School District	5	14%
Combination	5	14%

The location of the programs was surveyed according to the following possibilities: independent location, special education cooperative, existing alternative school, local school district, or any combination. Almost one half (46%) of the sites were independent from existing programs and local school districts. Only 1% of the Regional Safe Schools Programs was located within an existing special education cooperative.

The reasons for administrative transfer to the Regional Safe Schools Programs were surveyed according to three possibilities: multiple suspensions, expulsions, or a combination of both. The data from the respondents are addressed in Table 3.



Table 3

Demographics of Program: Eligibility for Program (N=37)

Reason for Administrative Transfer	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Multiple Suspension Only	6	16%
Expulsion Only	4	11%
Combination	27	73%

The majority (73%) of the programs required either multiple suspensions or an expulsion for eligibility for student transfer into the program. Only 11% of the programs used expulsion as the exclusive criteria for program transfer. Sixteen percent of the programs based their eligibility based on multiple suspensions and did not admit expelled students.

Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was, What was the methodology for curriculum used throughout the state for junior high programs? Responses from the survey that addressed this area are shown in Table 4.

Table 4Curriculum and Methodology (N=37)

Types of Curriculum/Methodology	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Teacher-led Instruction	4	11%
Use of District Curriculum	1	3%
(table continues)		

Types of Curriculum/Methodology	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Software-Driven Curriculum	2	5%
Combination	30	81%
Individual Computer Work Stations	18	51%
Networked Curriculum	21	57%
Tutorial PC Available to Students	16	43%
Internet Available to Students	16	43%
Tutoring	29	81%
Mentoring	16	43%

Of the programs reporting, 81% use a combination of teacher-led curriculum, along with some form of technological instruction. Only 11% reported using traditional teacher-oriented instruction, while only 5% used a computer software program solely as the basis for instruction. All programs reported having technology available to students. One half of the programs had individual computer work stations for their students, with 57% of the programs using a networked curriculum for their students. Use of the internet for resource was available in 43% of the reported responses.

Supplemental instruction was evident in the fact that 81 % of the programs offered tutoring for the students in addition to the instruction of the adopted curriculum. The use of mentors was evident in the fact that 44% of the programs indicated their use to aid instruction.

### Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was, What is the basis of student evaluation? The responses from the survey questions that dealt with this area are reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

#### Evaluation of Student Progress (N=37)

Ranges of Percentage of Students In RSSP	<u>N</u>	Course Work Completed	<u>N</u>	Advanced a Grade
0-10%	0	0%	2	6%
10-20%	0	0%	3	8%
20-30%	0	0%	1	3%
30-40%	1	3%	1	3%
40-50%	2	6%	2	6%
50-60%	4	11%	3	8%
60-70%	3	8%	4	11%
70-80%	10	28%	4	11%
80-90%	16	44%	16	44%

The range of 80-90% was reported by 44% of the programs regarding completion of course work and advancement to the next grade level. Of the students remaining in the program, 66% of the programs reported at least 60% of their students advancing to the next grade level. In the programs reporting, 80% reported at least 60% of the students completed their course work.

### Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, What behavioral modification programs are integrated within the programs, along with related social service assistance? The responses to the survey in this area are reflected in Table 6.

Table 6

#### Behavioral Modification Programs and Related Social Service Assistance (N=37)

Intervention Program	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
No Behavioral Modification	1	3%
Aggression Replacement Training	17	46%
Other Behavioral Programs	19	51%
Individual Counseling	33	92%
Group Counseling	24	67%
Social Worker	20	56%
Available Social Agencies	29	81%

No behavioral modification programs or social service support were reported by 3% of the respondents. Aggression Replacement Training was offered in 46% of the programs to go along with the academic programs. Social work was part of the program in 56% of the responses. Group counseling was offered in 67% of the reported programs. Social agencies were consulted and used in 81% of the programs responding to the survey.

#### Results for Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was, What is the criteria for overall success of the Regional Safe Schools Program? Surveyed programs were given the choice of ranges of percentages of students to estimate the program outcomes. The results from the survey are depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

#### Outcomes of the Program (N=37)

Outcomes of RSSP	<u>N</u>	Percentage of Programs
Improved Attendance (0-50%)	5	14%
Improved Attendance (50-90%)	32	86%
Improved Behavior (0-50%)	6	16%
Improved Behavior (50-90%)	31	84%
Course Work Completed (0-50%)	3	9%
Course Work Completed (50-90%)	34	91%
Returned to Home District (0-50%)	18	49%
Returned to Home District (50-90%)	19	51%
Advanced to Next Grade (0-50%)	10	26%
Advanced to Next Grade (50-90%)	27	74%
Dropped Out of Program (0-50%)	37	100%
Dropped Out of Program (50-90%)	0	0%

One of the surveyed items was improved attendance. Of the programs reporting, 86% indicated that 50-90% of the students improved their attendance patterns. In the area of improved behavior, 84% of the programs reported at least 50-90% of the students showed improved behavior. Over half (51%) of the programs reported that 50-90% of their students returned to their home districts after successful completion of their tenure in the Regional Safe Schools Programs. Almost three-fourths (74%) of the respondents reported 50-90% of their students advancing to the next grade level. All of the reporting programs indicated that less than 50% of their students dropped out of the Regional Safe Schools Program.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

This study investigated the Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois at the conclusion of the 1997-1998 school year. The scope of the study was to analyze the methodology for curriculum, the basis of student evaluation, the use of behavioral modification programs and related social services, and the overall perception of success of the programs. In order to effectively narrow the scope of this study, it was also the purpose to survey the various programs for demographic information concerning target grade level of the program, physical location of the program and program eligibility. A survey was developed by this author and mailed to the supervisory personnel of the existing 45 Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois.

The specific research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What is the methodology for curriculum used throughout Illinois for junior high grade students in the Regional Safe Schools Programs?
2. What is the basis of student evaluation?
3. What behavioral modification programs are used with the programs, along with related social services?
4. What are the criteria for the determination of success for the Regional Safe Schools Programs?

This study was formulated on the receipt of 37 of the 45 mailed surveys. The surveys were mailed to the administrative personnel in the 45 existing Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois. Descriptive statistics, using aggregated totals and

percentages, were used to analyze the data collected in reference to the specific research questions.

### Findings

The findings of this study revealed that most Regional Safe Schools Programs were serving students in grade six through twelve, although many programs focused on the junior high grade level students. The combination of teacher-led instruction and technology was most common. The technology available for instruction indicated that individual student's progress was enhanced through an individualized curriculum with the aid of tutors, mentors, and even the internet as resource. As in traditional educational settings, completion of course work and advancement to the next grade level were indicators of the basic success level of students. The Regional Safe Schools Program is an alternative program for students who failed in the traditional school setting for one reason or another. Supplemental support in the way of behavioral modification and related social services was highly evident in the existing programs. The program is considered a last chance program in lieu of suspension or expulsion from the traditional classroom. The number of students dropping out of the program or being expelled from the program was a small percentage. Those completing their tenure in the program usually completed their course work and advanced to the next grade level.

### Conclusions

The study revealed several important demographic characteristics of the Regional Safe Schools Programs in the state. Slightly over half of the programs serve all grades within the parameters of the legislation, which is grade six through grade



twelve. One third of the programs served only the junior high age student. Most of the programs during their initial year of existence were housed in sites independent from local school districts. The student eligibility for the program was identified by law to range from multiple suspensions to eligibility for expulsion from the traditional educational setting. Most programs used either as the criteria for administrative transfer.

Technology was widely used in the programs for instruction. Most of the programs had a combination of software driven curriculum, along with teacher instruction. Programs have incorporated technology into the classrooms for the purpose of individual work stations, tutoring, and even internet access. Over half of the programs used a networked curriculum, relying on individual academic growth and achievement as the pace of instruction for the individual student. Support for the student in the use of tutors and mentoring was strongly evident.

Programs gauged their success largely on completion of course work and advancement to the next grade level. This was evident in the high percentage of programs reporting 60% to 90% of their students completing course work and consequently advancing to the next grade level. Along with the academic strategies, behavioral modification programs were integrated into the program in almost all of the reporting programs. The most popular program was the Aggression Replacement Training, which was reported in almost one half of the sites.

Success of the program was determined by using different criteria. Not only were improved behavior, improved attendance noted in a high percentage of the students in the programs, but advancing to the next grade level and returning to the

home district were indicated by the reporting programs as outcomes for the students who completed their tenure within the program.

Of the students administratively transferred to the Regional Safe Schools Programs, 30% or fewer were reported by 85% of the programs as having dropped out of the program.

### Recommendations

It was the purpose of this study to survey the existing Regional Safe Schools Programs in Illinois to collect data from the research questions outlined in this study, to analyze the data and compare the results to the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program. The result of the study was to demographically compare the data and ultimately develop recommendations for program improvement in Vermilion County.

Regional Safe Schools Programs in their initial year of existence took on an appearance that reflected the different needs of each region. This diversity remained within the intent of the original legislation. Due to start-up cost factors, the programs began in many different locales. Fewer than one half established independent sites. The high cost of housing an alternative program caused Regional Offices of Education to pursue cooperative efforts with existing programs, local school districts, or a combination of both. Through this researcher's local knowledge of the Vermilion County Regional Safe Schools Program, which was acquired through involvement in its creation, it is important to reflect its brief history. The Vermilion County program formed a cooperative effort with the special education cooperative at a time when that special education association was also developing an independent

behavioral disorders site for the county schools. This was the one of the two reported in this research. By using established sites, the Regional Safe Schools Programs could free up important funds for personnel and curricular purposes, including technology. Since the program is a school in itself, there was a need for not only instructional personnel, but administrative and support staff. Basically, this meant purchasing services in these areas. Initial funds were substantial, but not sufficient to run a total program from the outset in Vermilion County. The Vermilion County Regional Office of Education contracted for the services through the special education association in the county. Funds have been continued through General Assembly action and will be enhanced by new monies from general state aid, which follows the students, by law to the Regional Safe Schools Programs.

Technology is a major factor in the delivery of the curriculum. Whether the curriculum is totally software-driven method or used in a combination with teacher-led instruction, the cost of hardware, software, and connectivity used a large portion of the initial funds. In the years to come, this expenditure will be for additional technological expenditures and maintenance of that technology but will not be of the magnitude it represented at the beginning. Funds will be used for expansion of programs that were not serving all of the grades designated in the legislation. The Vermilion County program was designed to serve students in grade six through grade eight. This was similar to approximately one-third of the programs throughout the state. The Vermilion County program is looking at expansion to age 16 with a General Educational Development component. Like many of the programs, the Vermilion County program had the capacity to serve more students in the initial year

than were administratively transferred. As the program becomes more user friendly, school districts will make more of an accommodating effort for the student transfer.

Behavioral modification programs seem to be an integral part of all of the programs. A majority of those listing a particular type of program listed the Aggression Replacement Training. This is also the program used in the Vermilion County program. It is important to actively include this in the curricular scope of the program. In Vermilion County, more of the personnel directly in contact with the students in the program must be trained in this area. This would also include substitute personnel who regularly work in the program.

Regions with lower funding levels were not able to provide regular support in some of the social services. The advantage of cooperative efforts with existing programs and contractual agreements is that some of these services are already in place. Those who developed stand-alone programs do not have the funds for a full-time social worker or counselor on site. The presence of such personnel on a readily available basis can contribute to the success of the individual student. These students have been administratively transferred for the most part, because they have failed in the regular system. Recognizing the reasons for that failure and trying to minimize the reoccurrence of those situations will require necessary support personnel in the social service area. The Vermilion County program must dedicate a larger portion of their funding toward that needed support. The research indicates 81% of the programs involve other community social agencies. This should be a point considered for incorporation into the Vermilion County program. Additional research

is recommended into the availability of local resources to enrich the opportunities of the students within the program.

The programs reporting indicated high percentages of success in the areas of improved behavior and attendance, completion of course work, and advancement to the next grade level. The failures in the programs were small percentages in these areas. But these statistics must be analyzed with the knowledge that the design of the Regional Safe Schools Programs is second chance in nature. The stakes for the individual student are higher when this transfer may be the last opportunity to progress in the traditional educational manner. In the case of the Vermilion County program, students who do not attend or cooperate in an acceptable manner are dismissed from the program. At this point, they are subject to serving the length of the suspension or expulsion. When there is a program, even with troubled youth, that the students take ownership in, the rate of success should be high.

This study recommends moving forward in Vermilion County to serve more students by increasing the age level to sixteen. The region needs to present more alternatives to the local school districts for these students. They have made a significant investment monetarily and in program awareness. The participation by the local districts is on the increase. They need to expand the offerings, which will serve another percentage of the student population and give another layer of academic and social security for students finishing the junior high level. To do this logistically, the program will have to relocate to secure added space for the expansion of the program. That will also result in a need for more staff. The General Assembly in Illinois remains at the present time committed to funding the program. It is imperative that

tracking and true evaluation take place in the coming years to measure the success of the students in the program as they return to the traditional settings of their home districts. The true evaluation as to the worth of this investment will be determined within the adult lives of the students in the Regional Safe Schools Programs. Without the opportunities to save academic achievement and maintain the track toward fulfilling educational requirements that lead to work force skills, these students would fail in the system. In the opinion of this researcher, the investment at this time is probably a bargain compared to the cost of possible social expenses for those who must rely on the welfare system without employability skills, or even turn to criminal activity without the adequate preparatory skills that formal education provides. An essential recommendation would be to do long range research of the follow-up nature to track the advancements of the students in the present program. This would evaluate the long-range benefits of the program. The Regional Safe Schools Program provides a piece of the alternative education puzzle. It must evaluate the outcomes, redefine the needs of the region, and strive to serve the students in a way that is effective and accountable to the General Assembly, whose support is necessary for the future of the program.

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## Appendix A

LRB8901168JSCW

Secretary of the Senate

Originated in the Senate

PUBLIC ACT 89-303

1	AN ACT to amend the School Code by changing Section 3-1	39
2	and adding Article 13A.	40
3	Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,	44
4	represented in the General Assembly:	45
5	Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing	48
6	Section 11A-7 as follows:	49
7	(105 ILCS 5/11A-7) (from Ch. 122, par. 11A-7)	52
8	Sec. 11A-7. Affected area. If territory is being	54
9	detached from one district to become part of the new	55
10	community unit district and that territory is 25% or more of	56
11	the total land area of the district from which it is being	
12	detached, or if the difference--between--the per cent of	57
13	student enrollment in the detached area to total student	58
14	enrollment in the district from which it is detached is	59
15	<u>greater than 8%</u> and the per cent of equalized assessed	
16	valuation in the detached area to total equalized assessed	61
17	valuation of the district from which it is detached is	62
18	greater than 8%, then all residents of the district from	
19	which the territory is to be detached shall be eligible to	64
20	vote on the proposition to create a community unit district;	65
21	provided, however, such residents shall not be eligible to	66
22	vote on the proposition for the issuance of bonds, if said	
23	proposition is submitted to the voters of the proposed	67
24	district.	
25	(Source: P.A. 84-1334.)	69
26	Section 10. The School Code is amended by changing	73
27	Section 3-1 and adding Article 13A as follows:	74
28	(105 ILCS 5/3-1) (from Ch. 122, par. 3-1)	77
29	Sec. 3-1. Election; eligibility. Quadrennially there	79



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1 shall be elected in every county, except those which have 80  
 2 been consolidated into a multicounty educational service 81  
 3 region under Article 3A and except those having a population 82  
 4 of 2,000,000 or more inhabitants, and beginning in 1994 in 83  
 5 that portion of a Class II county outside a city of 500,000  
 6 or more inhabitants and constituting an educational service 84  
 7 region, a regional superintendent of schools, who shall enter 85  
 8 upon the discharge of his duties on the first Monday of 86  
 9 August next after his election; provided, however, that the 87  
 10 term of office of each regional superintendent of schools in 88  
 11 office on November 30, 2002 is terminated on December 1, 89  
 12 2002, except that an incumbent regional superintendent of  
 13 schools shall continue to serve until his successor is 90  
 14 elected and qualified, and each regional superintendent of 91  
 15 schools elected at the general election in 2002 and every 92  
 16 four years thereafter shall assume office on the first day of  
 17 December next after his election. No one is eligible to file 93  
 18 his petition at any primary election for the nomination as 95  
 19 candidate for the office of regional superintendent of  
 20 schools nor to enter upon the duties of such office either by 96  
 21 election or appointment unless he possesses the following 97  
 22 qualifications: (1) he is of good character, (2) he has a 98  
 23 master's degree, (3) he has earned at least 20 semester hours 99  
 24 of credit in professional education at the graduate level, 100  
 25 (4) he holds a valid all grade supervisory certificate or a  
 26 valid state limited supervisory certificate, or a valid state 101  
 27 life supervisory certificate, or a valid administrative 102  
 28 certificate, (5) he has had at least 4 years experience in 103  
 29 teaching, and (6) he was engaged for at least 2 years of the 104  
 30 4 previous years in full time teaching or supervising in the  
 31 common public schools or serving as a county superintendent 105  
 32 of schools or regional superintendent of schools for an 106  
 33 educational service region in the State of Illinois. 107  
 34 No petition of any candidate for nomination for the 109

1 Schools Law.

2 (105 ILCS 5/13A-1 new) 149

3 Sec. 13A-1. Legislative Declaration. The General 1514 Assembly finds and declares as follows: 1525 (a) The children of this State constitute its most 1546 important resource, and in order to enable those children to 1557 reach their full potential, the State must provide them the 1568 quality public education that the Constitution of the State9 of Illinois mandates. 15710 (b) The State cannot provide its children with the 15911 education they deserve and require unless the environment of 16012 the public schools is conducive to learning. 16113 (c) That environment cannot be achieved unless an 16314 atmosphere of safety prevails, assuring that the person of 16415 each student, teacher, and staff member is respected, and 16516 that none of those people are subjected to violence, threats,17 harassment, intimidation, or otherwise confrontational or 16618 inappropriate behaviors that disrupt the educational 16719 atmosphere.20 (d) In most schools, although the disruptive students 16921 who are the primary cause of inappropriate educational 17022 environments comprise a small percentage of the total student 17123 body, they nevertheless consume a substantial amount of the 17224 time and resources of teachers and school administrators who25 are required to address and contain that disruptive behavior. 17326 (e) Disruptive students typically derive little benefit 17527 from traditional school programs and may benefit 17628 substantially by being transferred from their current school 17729 into an alternative public school, where their particular 17830 needs may be more appropriately and individually addressed31 and where they may benefit from the opportunity for a fresh 17932 start in a new educational environment. At those alternative 18033 schools, innovative academic and school-to-work programs, 181

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1 including but not limited to the techniques of work based 182  
2 learning and technology delivered learning, can be utilized  
3 to best help the students enrolled in those schools to become 184  
4 productive citizens.

5 (f) Students need an appropriate, constructive classroom 186  
6 atmosphere in order to benefit from the teacher's 187  
7 presentations. Students cannot afford the classroom 188  
8 disruptions and often become frustrated and angry at the  
9 inability of their teachers and schools to control disruptive 189  
10 students. As a result, they drop out of school too often. 190  
11 Furthermore, even if these students stay in school and 191  
12 graduate, they have been deprived by their disruptive  
13 classmates of the attention to their educational needs that 192  
14 their teachers would otherwise have provided, thereby 193  
15 diminishing their receiving the education and skills 194  
16 necessary to secure good jobs and become productive members 195  
17 of an increasingly competitive economic environment.

18 (g) Parents of school children statewide have expressed 197  
19 their rising anger and concern at the failure of their local 198  
20 public schools to provide a safe and appropriate educational 199  
21 environment for their children and to deal appropriately with 200  
22 disruptive students, and the General Assembly deems their 201  
23 concerns to be understandable and justified.

24 (h) Every school district in the State shall do all it 203  
25 can to ensure a safe and appropriate educational environment 204  
26 for all of its students, and the first, but not the only, 205  
27 step school districts must take to achieve that goal is to  
28 administratively transfer disruptive students from the 206  
29 schools they currently attend to the alternative schools 207  
30 created by this Article. Those administrative transfers will 208  
31 also provide optional educational programs to best fit the 209  
32 needs of the transferred students.

33 (i) Administrative transfers may prove more productive 211  
34 for dealing with disruptive students than out-of-school 212



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1 suspensions or expulsions, which have been the subject of 214  
2 much criticism.

3 (j) Because of the urgency of the problems described in 216  
4 this Section, as well as their statewide impact, the State of 217  
5 Illinois bears the responsibility to establish and fully fund 219  
6 alternative schools as soon as possible, thereby providing 220  
7 school districts with an option for dealing with disruptive 221  
8 students that they do not now possess.

9 (k) While school districts shall comply with all 223  
10 applicable federal laws and regulations, they should do so 224  
11 consistent with the goals and policies stated in this 225  
12 Article. Further, this Article is intended to be consistent  
13 with all applicable federal laws and regulations. 226

14 (l) An alternative school established under this Article 228  
15 is subject to the other provisions of this Code that apply 229  
16 generally in the public schools of this State and to the 230  
17 rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, except as  
18 otherwise provided in this Article. 231

19 (m) The provisions of the Illinois Educational Labor 233  
20 Relations Act apply to those alternative schools that are 234  
21 created on or after the effective date of this amendatory Act 235  
22 of 1995.

23 (105 ILCS 5/13A-2 new) 238  
24 Sec. 13A-2. Definitions. In this Article words and 241  
25 phrases have the meanings set forth in the following  
26 Sections.

27 (105 ILCS 5/13A-2.5 new) 244  
28 Sec. 13A-2.5. Disruptive student. "Disruptive student" 246  
29 includes suspension or expulsion eligible students in any of 247  
30 grades 6 through 12. Suspension or expulsion eligible 248  
31 students are those students that have been found to be 249  
32 eligible for suspension or expulsion through the discipline 250

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1	<u>process established by a school district.</u>	
2	(105 ILCS 5/13A-2.10 new)	253
3	<u>Sec. 13A-2.10. Regional superintendent. "Regional</u>	255
4	<u>superintendent" has the meaning ascribed to it in Section</u>	256
5	<u>3A-2 of this Code.</u>	
6	(105 ILCS 5/13A-2.15 new)	259
7	<u>Sec. 13A-2.15. Regional board. "Regional board" means</u>	261
8	<u>the regional board of school trustees (or its successors) in</u>	263
9	<u>an educational service region, as defined in Section 6-2 of</u>	264
10	<u>this Code.</u>	265
11	(105 ILCS 5/13A-2.20 new)	268
12	<u>Sec. 13A-2.20. Educational service region. "Educational</u>	270
13	<u>service region" has the meaning ascribed to it in Article 3A</u>	272
14	<u>of this Code.</u>	
15	(105 ILCS 5/13A-2.25 new)	275
16	<u>Sec. 13A-2.25. State board. "State board" means the</u>	277
17	<u>State Board of Education, as defined in Section 1A-1 of this</u>	278
18	<u>Code.</u>	
19	(105 ILCS 5/13A-2.30 new)	281
20	<u>Sec. 13A-2.30. District superintendent. "District</u>	283
21	<u>superintendent" has the meaning ascribed to it in Section</u>	284
22	<u>10-21.4 of this Code.</u>	
23	(105 ILCS 5/13A-3 new)	287
24	<u>Sec. 13A-3. Alternative schools.</u>	289
25	<u>(a) Except with respect to the Chicago public school</u>	291
26	<u>system as provided in Section 13A-11, beginning with the</u>	292
27	<u>1996-97 school year, there is hereby created in this State a</u>	294
28	<u>system of alternative school education. At least one</u>	

1 alternative school may be located within each educational 296  
2 service region.

3 (b) Each regional superintendent shall hold a public 298  
4 hearing, by December 1 of the school year following the 299  
5 effective date of this amendatory Act of 1995, to determine 300  
6 the need for an alternative school. The hearing shall be  
7 held before the regional board. The regional superintendent, 302  
8 after consulting with the district superintendent of each 303  
9 school district located within the regional superintendent's 304  
10 educational service region and the regional board, shall  
11 determine the location and the need of the alternative school 306  
12 within that region. In making this determination, the  
13 regional superintendent shall consider the following: 307

14 (1) the possible utilization of existing buildings, 309  
15 including but not limited to governmental buildings, that 310  
16 are, or could reasonably be made, usable as an 311  
17 alternative school;

18 (2) which available option would be least costly; 313  
19 and

20 (3) distances that administratively transferred 315  
21 students would need to travel and the costs of that 316  
22 travel.

23 (c) Upon determination of the need for establishment of 318  
24 an alternative school, each school district located within 319  
25 the region shall provide the regional superintendent with a 320  
26 copy of the district's discipline policy and procedure for 321  
27 effecting the suspension or expulsion of the students of that  
28 district. Thereafter, the regional superintendent in 322  
29 cooperation with a representative from each school district 323  
30 in the region shall establish and each school district in the 324  
31 region shall adopt policies and procedures that shall guide 325  
32 each district in the identification and placement of students  
33 in the alternative school program. 326

34 (d) The regional superintendent shall locate the 328

1 alternative school so that it is as far away from any other 330  
2 school buildings or school grounds in that educational  
3 service region as circumstances permit. 332  
4 (e) With the approval of the State board, additional 334  
5 alternative schools may be established in an educational 335  
6 service region. If the regional superintendent determines 336  
7 that an additional alternative school is required in the 337  
8 regional superintendent's educational service region, he or  
9 she may petition the State board to authorize one or more 339  
10 additional alternative schools in that region.  
11 (f) In determining whether an additional alternative 341  
12 school is necessary and appropriate for an educational 342  
13 service region requesting it, the State board shall consider, 343  
14 among other factors, the following:  
15 (1) the geographic size of the educational service 345  
16 region and distances that students within that region 346  
17 must travel in order to attend the existing alternative 347  
18 school;  
19 (2) the student population of schools comprising 349  
20 the educational service region and the likely student 350  
21 population of all alternative schools within that region 351  
22 if the petition is granted;  
23 (3) any other logistical considerations; and 353  
24 (4) the costs necessitated by establishing an 355  
25 additional alternative school in that educational service 356  
26 region.  
27 (g) In the event the State board grants a petition for 358  
28 an additional alternative school, then the State board, after 359  
29 consulting the regional superintendent, shall decide where 360  
30 the additional alternative school shall be located within 361  
31 that region.  
32 (105 ILCS 5/13A-4 new) 364  
33 Sec. 13A-4. Administrative transfers. A student who is 366



1 determined to be subject to suspension or expulsion in the 367  
 2 manner provided by Section 10-22.6 (or, in the case of a 369  
 3 student enrolled in the public schools of a school district  
 4 organized under Article 34, in accordance with the uniform 370  
 5 system of discipline established under Section 34-19) may be 371  
 6 immediately transferred to the alternative program. At the 372  
 7 earliest time following that transfer appropriate personnel 373  
 8 from the sending school district and appropriate personnel of 374  
 9 the alternative program shall meet to develop an alternative 375  
 10 education plan for the student. The student's parent or  
 11 guardian shall be invited to this meeting. The student may 376  
 12 be invited. The alternative educational plan shall include, 377  
 13 but not be limited to all of the following:  
 14       (1) The duration of the plan, including a date 379  
 15       after which the student may be returned to the regular 380  
 16       educational program in the public schools of the  
 17       transferring district. If the parent or guardian of a 381  
 18       student who is scheduled to be returned to the regular 382  
 19       education program in the public schools of the district 383  
 20       files a written objection to the return with the  
 21       principal of the alternative school, the matter shall be 384  
 22       referred by the principal to the regional superintendent 385  
 23       of the educational service region in which the 386  
 24       alternative school is located for a hearing. Notice of  
 25       the hearing shall be given by the regional superintendent 387  
 26       to the student's parent or guardian. After the hearing, 388  
 27       the regional superintendent may take such action as he or 389  
 28       she finds appropriate and in the best interests of the  
 29       student. The determination of the regional 390  
 30       superintendent shall be final.  
 31       (2) The specific academic and behavioral components 392  
 32       of the plan.  
 33       (3) A method and time frame for reviewing the 394  
 34       student's progress.



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1 Notwithstanding any other provision of this Article, if a 396  
2 student for whom an individualized educational program has 397  
3 been developed under Article 14 is transferred to an 398  
4 alternative school under this Article 13A, that  
5 individualized educational program shall continue to apply to 399  
6 that student following the transfer unless modified in 400  
7 accordance with the provisions of Article 14. 401

8 (105 ILCS 5/13A-5 new) 404  
9 Sec. 13A-5. Alternative school curriculum. 406


10 (a) The principal of an alternative school shall 408  
11 implement a multi-disciplinary curriculum designed to address 410  
12 the individualized needs of the students of that school, with 411  
13 special emphasis toward making the educational experience of 413  
14 each student meaningful and worthwhile. In the design and 414  
15 implementation of that curriculum, the principal shall give 415  
16 due consideration to the rules and regulations adopted by the  
17 State Board of Education for alternative schools and optional 416  
18 education programs.

19 (b) An administratively transferred student who 418  
20 successfully completes the requirements for his or her high 419  
21 school graduation shall receive a diploma identifying the 420  
22 student as graduating from the transferring high school. In  
23 the event the student is administratively transferred before 421  
24 enrolling in a high school, then that student shall receive a 422  
25 diploma from the high school the student would have attended 423  
26 if the student had not attended an alternative school. 424

27 (105 ILCS 5/13A-6 new) 427  
28 Sec. 13A-6. Staffing. 429

29 (a) The regional board constitutes the school board for 431  
30 all alternative schools located within that regional board's 432  
31 educational service region.


32 (b) Within the confines of the budget set by the 434



1 regional board, the regional superintendent is responsible 435  
2 for developing an administrative and fiscal structure for the 436  
3 program that shall be approved by the regional board for the 437  
4 alternative schools in that region.

5 (105 ILCS 5/13A-7 new) 440  
6 Sec. 13A-7. Employees. In all school districts, 442  
7 including special charter districts and districts located in 443  
8 cities having a population exceeding 500,000, the local 444  
9 school board shall grant, for a period of up to 5 years, a  
10 leave of absence to those of its employees who accept 446  
11 employment with an alternative school, provided that the  
12 employee shall satisfy any leave of absence provisions that 447  
13 may exist under a collective bargaining agreement or, if such 448  
14 an agreement does not exist, a school board policy. At the 449  
15 end of the authorized leave of absence, the employee must 450  
16 return to the school district in a comparable position or 451  
17 resign. The contractual continued service status and  
18 retirement benefits of an employee of the district who is 452  
19 granted a leave of absence to accept employment with an 453  
20 alternative school shall not be affected by that leave of 454  
21 absence.

22 (105 ILCS 5/13A-8 new) 457  
23 Sec. 13A-8. Funding. 459  
24 (a) The State of Illinois shall provide new and 461  
25 additional funding for the alternative schools within each 462  
26 educational service region by line item appropriation made to 463  
27 the State Board of Education for that purpose. This money, 464  
28 when appropriated, shall be provided to the regional board, 465  
29 which shall establish a budget, including salaries, for all 466  
30 alternative schools in that region.  
31 (b) The school district in which the school is located 468  
32 and from which a student is administratively transferred 469



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1 shall, as a result of an administrative transfer, have its 470  
2 average daily attendance funding with respect to that student 471  
3 transferred to the alternative school.

4 (105 ILCS 5/13A-9 new) 474  
5 Sec. 13A-9. Transportation. The school from which a 476  
6 student is administratively transferred shall pay all costs 478  
7 of transportation that the transfer necessitates. The  
8 regional superintendent shall coordinate all transportation 479  
9 arrangements with transferring school districts. The 480  
10 regional superintendent may also arrange for cooperation 481  
11 between school districts in the regional superintendent's 482  
12 educational service region regarding the transportation needs 483  
13 of transferred students in order to reduce the costs of that 485  
14 transportation and to provide greater convenience for the  
15 students involved. 486

16 (105 ILCS 5/13A-10 new) 489  
17 Sec. 13A-10. Suburban Cook County schools. 491  
18 (a) Solely for the purposes of this Article, each of the 493  
19 3 educational service centers in suburban Cook County shall 494  
20 constitute an educational service region. 495  
21 (b) The governing authority of each of the 3 suburban 497  
22 Cook County educational service centers shall perform the 498  
23 duties assigned by this Article to regional boards. 499  
24 (b) The executive director of each of the 3 suburban 501  
25 Cook County educational service centers shall perform the 502  
26 duties assigned by this Article to regional superintendents. 503

27 (105 ILCS 5/13A-11 new) 506  
28 Sec. 13A-11. Chicago public schools. 508  
29 (a) Because of the size of the Chicago public school 510  
30 system, as well as logistical concerns about establishing 511  
31 alternative schools within Chicago, alternative schools shall 512

- 1 not be created within the Chicago public school system until 514  
 2 the 1997-98 school year.
- 3 (b) The Chicago Board of Education shall develop and 516  
 4 provide a plan for implementing alternative schools in 517  
 5 Chicago to the State board and the General Assembly no later 518  
 6 than February 15, 1997. The State board shall conduct public  
 7 hearings on this plan as quickly as possible, and by April 519  
 8 15, 1997, either (1) approve the plan, (2) approve the plan 520  
 9 with specific modifications in which the Chicago Board of 521  
 10 Education must concur in order for the modifications to be  
 11 implemented, or (3) reject the plan. 522
- 12 Section 15. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon 525  
 becoming law.

530  
532

535  
536

APPROVED

this 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 1995.

## Appendix B

## Regional Safe Schools Program Data Analysis Instrument - FY 98

**Part I: Demographic Information**

Please fill out the following demographic information using the codes in the Variable Code Table Box:

No.		Variable Code Table	No.		Variable Code Table
1	A	6 through 8	3	A	independent site
	B	6 through 9		B	special education coop
	C	9 through 12		C	existing alternative school
	D	6 through 12		D	local school district
2	A	1	4	A	Suspension
	B	2		B	Expulsion
	C	3	5	A	Regular School
	D	4 or more		B	Special Education

1. What grade level does the RSSP in your region serve? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many individual sites for the RSSP in your region are there? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the location of your sites(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the basis for student eligibility for the students in the RSSP? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the educational status of the student? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II: Instructional/Behavioral Modification Information**

Please fill out the following demographic information using the codes in the Variable Code Table Box:

No.		Variable Code Table	No.		Variable Code Table
6	A	teacher-led instruction	8	A	none
	B	use district curriculum		B	Aggression Replacement Training
	C	software curriculum		C	Other
	D	combination			
7	A	individual PC work station			
	B	networked curriculum			
	C	tutorial PC's available			
	D	internet available			
	E	no technology			

6. What type of instruction program is used in your RSSP? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What type of technology is available to your students? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What type of behavioral modification intervention is used? \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III: Services Offered

Please fill out the following services information using the codes in the Variable Code Table Box:

No.		Variable Code Table	No.		Variable Code Table
9	A	tutoring		E	group counseling
	B	mentoring		F	social worker
	C	life skills training		G	special education
	D	individual counseling		H	community agencies

9. List any of the services offered to the students in the RSSP, using the codes from the Variable Code Table above.

### Part IV: Outcomes of the Program

Check the best estimate of the percentage range of the students enrolled in the RSSP during the course of the school year.

Outcomes	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	80-90%
improved attendance									
improved behavior									
course work completed									
returned to home district									
advanced to next grade									
dropped out of RSSP									

### Part V: Narrative Comments

10. List the name of the software used for curriculum, if any. \_\_\_\_\_

11. List any major problems with the RSSP you encountered during the year.

12. What follow-up is being provided for students who re-enter the regular classroom after completing their assignment to the RSSP?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this information for this field study. I appreciate your interest in the Regional Safe Schools Program. I share that interest and hope to use the data gathered in this study to help improve the Vermilion County program. Please return this form in the enclosed envelope.

## Appendix C

June 1, 1998

Jeff May, Program Director  
Will County Regional Safe Schools Program  
1320 Union Street  
Morris, IL 60450

Dear Colleague,

I am the Assistant Regional Superintendent in Vermilion County. I am writing with two purposes with the intent that each will benefit the other. I am presently completing my program toward attaining my superintendent's endorsement. The culminating experience of the program is the field study. I have chosen to survey several of the components of the Regional Safe Schools Programs which our office, like all other Regional Offices of Education has been actively involved with throughout the 1997-1998 school year. It is my intention not to duplicate the evaluation system of the Illinois State Board of Education, but to supplement the data from ISBE and apply it toward improvement of the Vermilion County Program.

I am asking that you take a few minutes of your valuable time and fill out the enclosed survey and return it to me in the provided envelope. I will collect the data, analyze it, and make application of many of the ideas with the intent to improve the Vermilion County program. It is my goal to begin analyzing the information by June 30, 1998.

If you are interested in the results of my study, I will be more than glad to mail (or e-mail) a copy to your program site. You may contact me through any of the means listed below.

I thank you very much for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Metzen, Assistant  
Vermilion County Regional Office of Education  
200 S. College, Suite B  
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E-Mail: [mmetzen@roe54.k12.il.us](mailto:mmetzen@roe54.k12.il.us)